



THE SUN

A day that touched a generation

By [Rita Savard](#) | PUBLISHED: June 12, 2011 at 12:00 a.m

Amy Brown was a college freshman, sketching in art class, on Sept. 11, 2001. From the time she was born, family and teachers prepared her for the world. But on that day, students everywhere learned the unthinkable: Planes could be used as weapons and flown into buildings, a country could cry for days and everything can change in an instant.

“At first I thought it was an accident. Then the second plane hit,” said Brown, now 28. “I freaked out, thinking Boston was going to be next. Not knowing what was going to happen next, or where it would happen, was truly terrifying. Everyone on campus was in a rush to get home.”

Hijacked jetliners brought down the World Trade Center towers, cut a hole through the Pentagon and left nearly 3,000 dead. Ten years later, the 9/11 generation has come of age in a period of war, color-coded terror alerts and a fallen economy — and they say they’re more aware of the world around them because of it.

The “9/11 generation,” a label experts give to a subgroup of the millennial generation, or generation Net, is made up of two subgroups — youths who were in high school or college when the terror attacks occurred, and children who were in elementary school.

For older children, the experience was less filtered. Watching and discussing the event brought them closer together and inspired a new sense of patriotism in many. At colleges across the country there was an increased interest in criminal-justice courses, courses on terrorism and public service.

After 9/11, most Americans reacted with shock, disbelief, a need to huddle with friends and family and retreat from gatherings of large groups. Some bought guns or stocked up on duct tape and canned goods. Others searched for information.

But among college students, there were more lasting reactions. As the initial shock wore off, many became intensely patriotic, giving blood, volunteering for charitable groups, becoming engaged in politics.

Brown was in her first week of classes at the Montserrat College of Art in Beverly. She took a few days off from school after 9/11. Upon returning to classes, the campus was wallpapered in artwork as students worked through their sadness and newfound fears. “Whether it was literal or abstract, art helped us deal with what we were feeling,” Brown said.

Of all the artwork she saw on campus, it was the paintings and drawings of elementary-school students that hit the hardest. “I can still vividly remember a picture with two small buildings and a plane flying toward one,” Brown said. “Then there was another with people just as tall as buildings, but they all had sad faces and tears. People were important to them, so they were just as big as everything else.”

Brown became an elementary-school art teacher and now works in the Framingham Public Schools. She and her husband, Jeremy, bought a house in their hometown of Chelmsford where they plan to raise a family of their own. Brown’s younger brother, Brian, who was a sophomore in Chelmsford High on 9/11, is now in the Army. Though it’s been ten years since the 9/11 attacks, Brown’s students have been sending artwork to the soldiers overseas. Some artwork has even been made into t-shirts and 100% of the money from those sales were used to purchase care packages for the soldiers.

The attacks brought terror to our doorsteps, but the 9/11 generation has developed the skills to make a lasting impact of its own. Defeating the enemy isn’t going to happen with warheads, drones or even military muscle. It’s intelligence gathering that will defeat terrorists, more global awareness. Overall, we’re in a better position before 9/11 in terms of that awareness and a commitment to thinking differently about our lives.

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A day that touched a generation

Teens on 9/11, they entered adulthood with a heightened global awareness

By Rita Savard rsavard@lowellsun.com

Amy Brown was a college freshman, sketching in art class. Michael Gordon was in a high-school cafeteria and Heather Makrez was logging through sociology when her teacher got a message and quickly switched on the TV.

From the time they were born, family and teachers prepared them for the world. But on Sept. 11, 2001, stu-



Amy Brown in 2001. She was a freshman in



Amy Brown, of Chelmsford, was sketching in class during her first week at the Montserrat College of Art in Beverly when the terrorist attacks came. "Art helped us deal with what we were feeling," she said. Now an art teacher at the Hemenway Elementary School in Frammingham, she holds some of her students' drawings thanking those who serve in the military.

PHOTO: JESSICA WILSON

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